



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

For Release: March 19, 1993

Hugh Vickery 202-208-5634

MIGRATORY BIRD HARVEST INFORMATION PROGRAM TAKES FLIGHT

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is implementing a new Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program to help biologists better manage the Nation's migratory bird populations. The program, currently in effect in three states on a pilot basis, is to be phased in for the remainder of the states by 1998.

Under this program, hunters will provide their names and addresses when buying state licenses to hunt migratory birds (waterfowl, woodcock, doves, pigeons, snipe, rails, and gallinules). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will then ask a sample of these hunters to provide a record of their hunting activity and success. This information will be used to improve current waterfowl harvest estimates and to develop harvest estimates for all migratory game birds throughout North America. A final rule outlining the effort appeared in the Federal Register on March 19, 1993.

Current national harvest surveys are based on names gathered through the sale of Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps, commonly called Federal Duck Stamps, which all waterfowl hunters 16 years of age or older must purchase to hunt ducks,

(more)

geese, or swans. But nearly half the 5 million migratory bird hunters in the United States hunt only non-waterfowl species, so they are not included in the survey. The Harvest Information Program will result in improved harvest records for all migratory game birds.

"Improved harvest records mean improved management capabilities," said Marshall Howe, acting Chief of the Office of Migratory Bird Management. "We will be in a more secure position to prevent depletion of birds in low supply and provide ample harvest opportunities for the more abundant species."

Wildlife biologists and administrators recognized the need for improved migratory bird harvest information several decades ago. In 1990, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies requested the Service lead the way by establishing a cooperative program with state wildlife agencies to obtain the needed information. California, Missouri, and South Dakota agreed to participate in a pilot program started in 1992.

The individual states will have several options for how they provide the names and addresses of their hunters. States may charge a small handling fee to cover administrative costs and compensate license vendors. The program will not generate revenue for the Service, and the Service will only use names and addresses provided through the program for its survey purposes.

"The Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program is just good wildlife conservation," Howe added. "The better information we have on all aspects of the birds and their habitats, the more effectively we can ensure that all species will be able to sustain healthy population levels."

-DOI-